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TO

MR. SECRETARY DALLAS.

On his proposition to Congress for the Establishment of a National Bank in the United States of America.

London, 13th January, 1816.

SIR,—I have read with great care, and uncommon interest, your proposition to Congress, under the date of 6th December, 1815, for the establishment of a *National Bank*; and, as a part of the reasons which you urge in support of that proposition appear to be founded on the experience of a similar institution in England, I cannot refrain from endeavouring to show you what some of those effects really have been, and what is, at present, the situation of this country, owing, in a great measure, to the existence of a great Banking establishment, closely connected with the government.

It is impossible for me, or for any man, not actually upon the spot, to know what are the measures which ought to be adopted in order to cause gold and silver to return to circulation; but I am quite sure, that the sooner they return the better, and that any measure calculated to make men regard them as mere merchandize, must, in the end, produce very mischievous effects. That your paper-money is now depreciated, appears certain; that the depreciation has arisen from the excessive issues of paper-money, of one sort or another, it appears, is not less certain; and it cannot be doubted, I think, that the specie will not return without a *great diminution*, or, a *total discredit*, of that paper-money. In the act of withdrawing their paper from circulation, the persons who have issued it must experience such difficulties as will deter them from the encounter as long as possible; and, probably, the only cure for the evil will, at last, be found, in a *two-price* conflict between the specie and the paper, in which conflict the latter would be sure to fall, and the loss, during the struggle, would so divide itself amongst the community, that every man would suffer his fair share, and no more.

You seem to imagine that the paper-

money of this country has not, in fact, been depreciated, because "*public confidence*" has still been given to it, and because it has been current, and still is current, without producing two prices. But, sir, you should bear in mind, that the Bank of England paper has, by a succession of acts of parliament, been made, to all intents and purposes, a *legal tender*. That landlords are compelled to take it in payment of rents, though in violation of the contract on the part of the tenant. The lenders, though they lent in gold, are compelled to receive payment in paper. And that it is a *crime* to sell, or buy, coin for paper, otherwise than at par. Its currency, then, cannot be attributed to "*public confidence*," but to the force of the law. Besides, in this country, 70 millions of pounds have, for several years past, been collected annually. The whole rental of the Kingdom, both lands and houses, amounts to only 44 millions annually, according to that unerring standard, the amount of the Property Tax. So that, here is almost double the amount of the rent of the Kingdom, actually collected in Taxes; and, as these taxes are paid in Bank-paper, it requires no "*public confidence*" to keep that paper in circulation. By the various stamp duties on conveyances, wills, legacies, &c., the government actually receives, in the space of every sixteen years, the amount of the fee simple of one half of the houses and lands. Of the out goings of every farm and every trade, more than half goes into the hands of the government, which keeps in constant employ more than a hundred thousand taxgatherers, at an expense of more than 24 millions of dollars a year. In such a case it is useless to seek for "*public confidence*." The government is, in fact, the *sole real proprietor* in the whole country. It makes us produce our books and swear to the correctness of our accounts; and, even after that, it takes what it pleases, for the law is, that we shall not, if we complain, have the benefit of a *trial* of any sort. The Landlord, the Farmer, the Tradesman, the Shop-keeper, are no more than so many agents of the Government, to *manage* certain descriptions and portions of property, and to pay over to its collectors the profits, keeping

to themselves a bare sufficiency to enable them to live. "Public confidence," in such a case, must be wholly out of the question. It is a master, furnishing a currency to his servants. That currency is the instrument that he makes use of in his operations of exaction; and it is of very little consequence to the servants what that currency really is.

It would be unnecessary to describe how different, happily, your situation is from ours, in this respect. The difference must strike every one, and must, I am sure, convince you, that this paper-money having so long continued in circulation, is no reason why a paper-money of the same description should have even the smallest chance of existing, for any length of time, in America.

But it is to the evils of a *National Bank*, as experienced by us, to which I particularly wish to draw your attention. You profess, and, I dare say, very sincerely, so to frame this establishment, in America, that it shall be *independent* of the government. It is next to impossible, indeed, that you, or that any of the persons in whose hands the government is, should have a desire to make a Bank what our Bank has long been. But, while there is a possibility of its becoming, in any hands, or at any time, any thing resembling this Bank, it must be matter of serious dread to every friend of America that such an Establishment is likely to take place.

It was known, doubtless, to many persons, but it was not generally known, nor even suspected, that the bank of England was a mere tool of the government, until the year 1797, when the stoppage of cash payments took place. Then it was clearly seen, and, as has been shown in detail in "*Paper against Gold*," it became manifest to all the world. Since that period such facts have come to light as would have roused to open violence any people, not rendered abject, and even corrupt, by the power and example of its government.

During the proceedings against Lord Melville, it appeared, and that, too, in evidence upon oath, that he (who was cleared by the vote of a *Majority* of the House of Lords) had embezzled large sums of the public money. This money he drew, or part of it, at least, illegally out of the hands of the Bank. The Bank Directors knew of this. The governor went to Pitt and reported the circum-

stance to him. The latter gave the hint not to mention the matter. The Bank was silent: the public was deprived of its money; and the transaction transpired, at last, in consequence of a party conflict between Lord St. Vincent and his rival.

The names of *Boyd and Benfield* are notorious. The latter had, at one time, eight votes in the House of Commons. While he was thus strong in interest with the minister, he and his partner took a loan; that is to say, they lent several millions to the government. Before they had paid in all their instalments, they became unable to proceed. Upon this the minister made the Bank advance them, without interest, out of public money lodged in the Bank, a sufficient sum to complete their instalments, upon which they received interest.

I cite only these two instances amongst a hundred that might be cited, in which the Directors of the Bank have been proud to be the mere agents of the minister of the day for the carrying on of his delusions, oppressions, and frauds. The last-mentioned transaction, for his share in which the minister ought to have stood in the pillory, produced, when it was made known, a *Bill of Indemnity*, more than ten years after the deed had been committed. The very passing of such a bill proves that a *crime* had been committed, a crime, too, never confessed, till it was *detected*. But, though the minister had acted his part in it, in defiance of his oath of office; though he had robbed the nation for the purpose of securing Benfield's votes in the House of Commons; though he was already proved to have been guilty of the double crime of speculation and corruption, the Bank Directors ought not to have escaped, they having been not only privy to the whole transaction, but having been the agents, from first to last, in the foul deed. Yet, after all this, the Bank Directors are cried up as patterns of honour and integrity, and this insulted people have been compelled to pay for the erection of a costly monument in honour of the memory of Pitt!

But, Sir, it is as a *Bank of Discount* that this establishment exercises the most pernicious influence. The Directors, who are a chosen divan, regulate these discounts, and, in so doing, decide, in some sort, upon the rise or fall, the making or the ruin, of all men in trade, and, indeed,

of most other men, except such as have no capital at all. The amount of these discounts, at any given time, is supposed to be about *six millions of pounds*. As they are never for more than two months, here is a sum of *thirty-six millions*, lent every year to individuals. The bills for discount are sent in; the Directors consent, or not, without any reason assigned.

Now, Sir, consider the magnitude of the sum discounted. It is little short of *half a million of dollars a day*, Sundays excepted. It is perfectly well known to you, that, in such a state of things, almost every man in trade is under the necessity of having a regular supply from discounting. If he be excluded from his fair share here, he cannot trade with the same advantage as other men trade. If he be in the practice of discounting, and, if his discounts be cut off, he cannot go on; he stops payment, and is frequently ruined for ever, even while he possesses property which, with the fair chances of time, would not only enable him to pay his debts, but to proceed in prosperity.

I beseech you, then, Sir, to look seriously at the extent of the dangerous power of these Bank Directors. You must see, that they hold in their hand the pecuniary fate of a very large part of the community, and that they have it in their power, every day of their lives, to destroy the credit of many men, and to plunge their families into shame and misery. If I am asked for their *motives* to acts like these, to pursue such partiality, to make themselves the instruments in committing such detestable injustice and cruelty, need I point out to you, that they have been, and must be, constantly actuated by the strongest political prejudices? The fact is, however, that the Bank of England, by means of its power of granting or withholding discounts, has been, and is, one of the most potent instruments of political corruption on the one hand, and of political vengeance, on the other hand. I myself could name twenty men, who stood very high in trade and credit, who have been totally ruined, reduced almost to mere beggary, by the stoppage of their discounts at the Bank, without any other cause than that of their having taken an open part in opposition to the acts of the government. This is so notorious, that men are not ashamed to avow, when solicited to come forward in petitioning or

remonstrating, that it would be their ruin with the Bank. Men who burn with indignation at the insults offered to the public; men who talk, in their private circles, in the same way that I am talking to the Americans, dare not open their lips in public, dare not put their hand to a petition against any act, or intended act, of the government. And this is so well, and so universally understood; their doing so is regarded as so certain a cause of ruin, that no man expects them to expose themselves to such calamity.

Can your mind picture to itself a more potent, and, at the same time, a more disgraceful, instrument of political corruption and subjugation? Such is the state of what is impudently called the *representation in parliament*; such the well-known and open traffic in seats in the House of Commons; such the bribing and corruption employed without the least reserve at every general election, that it may be said, that, in this way, the Bank can do no harm, because it is impossible for the thing to be worse, more disgraceful, or more infamous. Yet, in this way, too, the Bank is a great actor. After every election for the city of London, numbers of persons, whose public spirit during the heat of a combat, overcomes their prudence, fall a sacrifice to their virtue. In London the four Members are chosen by the *Livery*, some of these are little tradesmen, and journeymen, beneath the power of the Bank. These following the dictates of their minds, are able to choose *one* member. The other three are nominated by the government, and chosen under the terrors of the Bank.

A striking instance of the power of the Bank, as to elections, was exhibited in the contest between SIR FRANCIS BURDETT and MR. MELLISH, for the county of Middlesex. Sir Francis Burdett, a gentleman of ancient family, large landed estates, a man of learning, of great eloquence, of undaunted courage, and so free from all the dirty work of court intrigue, no one of his family ever having touched the public money in any shape, was, as was natural to be expected, the real choice of the people, who were half mad to think that any man should dare to oppose him. Yet Mr Mellish, a man so destitute of talent as to be unable to speak common sense, in public, for half a minute, but the member of the govern-

ment, and a Bank Director, was chosen by the freeholders, who, as you must suppose, are nearly all merchants, traders, and government dependants. But the city of Westminster, (though the place of residence of the court,) where every *householder* has a vote, not only chose Sir Francis Burdett, but chose him free of all expense, and even without his consenting to be regarded as a *candidate*, that is to say, as a person *asking* to be chosen.

But, the political power of the Bank is not confined to London and to its immediate vicinity. It is by means of Country Banks (a thousand in number, exclusive of Scotland) extended to every part of the kingdom. It must be clear to you, that these Banks, whose notes are *payable upon demand in Bank of England paper*, must be dependent upon the Bank of England; that they must lean upon that Bank for support, or, must always have real funds in their hands equal in amount to their issues, in which latter case their business could not possibly be attended with any profit. In short, it is evident, that as far as political influence goes, the Country Banks are no more than Branches of the Bank of England. This latter, as you will easily suppose, is well acquainted with the politics, and political conduct more especially, of every Country Banker. Indeed, it is notorious, that the government, which has, in the first place, a *parson* in every parish, which has a hundred thousand taxgatherers, who are really so many spies at the same time, keeps as regular an account of the politics of the Country Bankers, as it did of the proceedings of Captain Henry. The Bank, being as we have seen, a subaltern co-operator with the government, will not, you will readily believe, uphold a Country Banker, whose sentiments, or, at least, whose political conduct, is hostile to any measure of the government; and, I defy any man to produce a single instance, where any Country Banker of this description has, for any length of time, been able to support his establishment.

The Country Banker being thus almost as much a tool of the government as if he were actually nominated and appointed by the Treasury, will not, of course, discount for persons who act in opposition to that government. Indeed, he is, in

some sort, dependent on the taxgatherers, who deposite their collections with him, and he is under the *watchfulness*, or as Louis the Desired would call it, the *surveillance*, of this fiscal police. Hence, throughout his circle, all who stand in need of discounts are kept in a constant state of subjection by him, even if they would otherwise be able to set the taxgatherer at defiance. So that, with the exception of very little tradesmen, and journeymen, and labourers, there is hardly a man in a thousand in the whole country, who is not under the influence of the Bank of England, either from its own immediate power, or that of its thousand satellites.

The manner in which this influence operates, the shapes in which its effects exhibit themselves, the humiliation, the degradation, that it, together with the other parts of the system, have produced, would be too painful to be contemplated, if they could be faithfully portrayed. How many men of property and of talents am I personally acquainted with, who hold in abhorrence the tyrannical acts and corrupt practices of the government; who have felt as keenly as any American ever felt, on account of the burning and sacking of your defenceless towns and villages, the butchering of your people by the hands of savages, the basely murdering of your seamen at Dartmoor; how many such men do I know, who are stung to the quick by the insults daily offered to this people, through the Hanoverians and the taxgatherers, and by the reflection of what England once was. But, how few, how very few, have I ever found, when it came to the point of signing *names*, or *speaking in public*, who dared to brave the vengeance of the taxgatherer and the Country Banker! It is a most lamentable and shameful fact, but not more lamentable and shameful than notorious, that thousands of men, in every county in this kingdom, who, sitting amongst their private friends, execrate the oppressions under which the country groans, come forth in public and range themselves on the side of the oppressors.

Certainly, Sir, you will agree with me, that it would be difficult for despotism to invent a more potent and better disguised instrument, for the enslaving and degrading of a people, than the Bank of England, and its satellites, the Country

Banks. Whether a similar institution would be likely to produce, in any degree, similar effects, in America, I do not pretend to determine. I must leave that question to be decided by those who, from possessing a greater stock of local information, are better able than I am to judge, how far the facts I have been stating are calculated to deter the Americans from running the risk of the consequences of a National Bank.

It is very true, and the truth has been established beyond all doubt by our experience, that a National Bank of extensive funds, supported by, and supporting the government, is capable of producing astonishing national exertions. It has the power of drawing forth in the most expeditious manner, and of employing with the greatest effect, all the energies of a nation, whether for purposes of internal or external exertions. But, the history of the last 25 years shows very clearly, that these extraordinary efforts cannot be of *long duration*; and that they are followed by languor and misery.

The present state of this kingdom is such as was, perhaps, never before witnessed. From what I recollect of the descriptions that I used to hear of New-Jersey, while that state had a paper-money after the close of your revolutionary war, we may be somewhat in a similar situation as to distress, though from an opposite movement, on the part of the paper-money, the New-Jersey money having depreciated to a very low value, and our paper-money having recently risen in value.

Our case is this, for here I *dare* state it without disguise: It was soon perceived, after the peace, made in 1814, that rich people were leaving the country in numbers truly alarming. Forty thousand families were already gone, not to visit, but to live on, the Continent. Manufacturers and Artizans were following their customers. Some of the best were already gone to France. It was imagined by the government, that, to prevent this, the price of provisions must be lowered, it not being perceived, that this would ruin agriculture, by which the manufactures were chiefly sustained; and thus we soon saw the government in the ridiculous situation of endeavouring to retain its people at home by the means of cheap living, while

it was actually passing a law to prevent the importation of foreign corn!

But the greatest of the difficulties which peace presented was the *exchange*, and the impossibility, in the then state of the Bank Paper, for the Bank to *resume its payments in specie*, which, according to *law*, it was to do at the end of six months after the conclusion of peace. At the time to which I am referring, we were still at war with America; and, therefore, there was a pretext left for renewing the law of non-payment in specie, in 1814. But, when that war was at an end, and when the Bourbons had been restored a second time, and all ground of further war removed, it became the Bank and the Government seriously to think of the means of resuming payments in specie at the Bank. The Bank-paper was so depreciated as for a *light guinea* (which the law permitted to be sold) to sell in London, for 29 shillings in paper-money. The pound note sold at Calais for about 14s. in gold or silver. The exchange was becoming daily more and more against us, and it became manifest, that our paper would soon become the scorn of the mercantile world; that an opinion of our insufficiency to keep up our credit would be excited; that foreigners, finding that their interest in our funds lost a third of its nominal amount in crossing the water, would withdraw their capital from so precarious a situation, and that, in short, *two prices* could not be at any great distance, seeing that *stock*, or Funded Property, already began to be sold at *forty-five* for gold, when the paper price was *fifty-seven*.

Nor were these, though very powerful, the only reasons for the change, which I am about to describe. Many very powerful men are great fundholders, as you will easily suppose when you perceive, that the annual interest of the National Debt was equal in amount (and *now* surpasses) the whole of the annual rental of the kingdom. These persons naturally wished to add to their incomes by raising the value of the paper, whereby they would obtain payment in gold, or in paper nearly equal to gold, for a loan which they had made in depreciated paper. Amongst these *great fundholders* were the *King and Queen*, owning between them more, I believe, than three millions of stock, and which stock is, by act of par-

liament, *exempted from the Property Tax*, which all other persons pay upon their stock. Without stopping here, sir, to call on you to join me in admiration of the virtue which could induce these two royal personages to put by their little savings, and to lend them to their own loving and "thinking" subjects; without stopping to indulge in the reflections, into which such a curious fact would lead us, I need hardly observe, that the interests of these two fundholders were not the last to be taken into view by ministers like the son of Charles Jenkinson and the patron of Captain Henry. Besides these, however, there were the interests of the Civil List, of all the Placemen, active and sinecure, all the pensioners, royal and noble. All this numerous tribe, as well as all the army and navy, upon full pay or half pay, had a direct interest, a great and immediate interest, in the *raising of the value of money*; for, in whatever degree that took place, their salaries must, of course, be augmented.

Under the influence of such a mass of powerful motives, it was no wonder that the ministers resolved to raise the value of the paper-money. They did so resolve, but without considering, apparently, that, in order to wring double taxes from the people, they were about to do that which might prove the speedy destruction of the whole system. The Bank of England, acting in concert always with the Ministers, began to *narrow its discounts*, and especially to the Country Banks. The Country Banks were compelled to make a similar movement. In less than a year the quantity of paper was so diminished, that the bushel of wheat fell to an average of 7s. after having been at an average of 15s. to 17s. for many years, while taxes of all descriptions continued the same, and were collected with daily increasing vigour. Now began to appear the effects of the tremendous power of such a Bank, co-operating with such a government. The farmers all over the country were plunged down from their prosperity into the very lowest depths of distress. The trades-people soon found that they could not live while the farmer was distressed. Failures, misery, shame, disgrace, have overspread the country. Nobody is exempt from the general scourge, except the fundholders, the placemen, the pensioners, the army, the navy, and the

royal family. Thus, at the sitting, perhaps, of one council of placemen; in the space, perhaps, of one hour; by the speaking of, perhaps, five sentences; by the mere turning, as it were, of a screw, a whole nation of tax-payers have been robbed of half their property, and that, too, by those who are paid for taking care of their concerns; but, which act of robbery could not have been committed without the existence of a great Bank, closely connected with, and dependent upon the government. If the people of America are disposed to laugh at the distresses of the English nation, who, in their eagerness to enslave, and entail slavery on, other countries; who in their malicious zeal for restoring tyranny and persecution in every country where they had been abolished, have thus plunged themselves into misery, and laid their own breasts bare to those very bayonets, for the employment of which against the breasts of others they have so cheerfully paid: if, upon this ground, the people of America are disposed to laugh at the distresses of Englishmen, so far from blaming them, I join them in the laugh. But, then, it behooves the people of America to be very cautious how they adopt, even in its most inoffensive form, any part of that system, which has finally brought such complete ruin on the people of England.

To draw a full and true picture of the distress, at this moment prevailing in England, is beyond the power of any pen or any tongue. Some traits only can be given. The man, who has a fixed *rent* to pay, scarcely raises on his land the amount of that rent, together with the amount of labour. If he has any capital in reserve, he is compelled to draw upon that; if he has none, his grain and cattle are seized by the government; he cannot pay his rates and debts, and he goes to jail. Many men in my own neighbourhood, in Hampshire, supposed to be of great wealth a twelvemonth ago, are now in Winchester jail, their families in all the horrors of misery, in the midst of a community no one of whom is able to afford them relief. It is computed, that there are *Five Thousand Farmers*, lately deemed opulent men, at this moment in the jails of England and Wales. The persons belonging to their families may amount to *twenty-five thousand*, exclusive of the tradesmen that they have dragged

down with them. A man who mortgaged his estate three or four years ago, for half its worth, now finds that he has no estate at all, real property having fallen in value more than one half. But, Sir, with you I need enter in no detail here, for you will see, at a single glance, that all contracts have been virtually violated, and that all is confusion and ruin. The farmer cannot employ the labourer; but the latter, when on the point of starvation, turns round to the farmer, and demands bread in the shape of *parish relief*, which the law has awarded him; and, at the moment when I am writing, the amount of the poor rates, in many parishes, is *greater than that of the whole of the wages paid to labourers, including their board*.

Yet, strange as it may appear to those out of the secrets of our press, that press is almost wholly silent upon this subject. To read our newspapers you would imagine, that while the Prince Regent and his court are wallowing in luxury, and spending hundreds of thousands at Brighton, the people are enjoying, in a state of domestic happiness, the Triumphs over Freedom in France. When the parliament meets, however, something of a decided character must take place; for, in spite of the corrupt state of that body; in spite of the places and pensions held by its members; and, in spite of the unanimous wish of both parties, to keep our distresses and approaching feebleness hidden from the world, and especially from America, something must, though with great reluctance, be brought out. The Borough-mongers who have been the cause of all the mischief, who have voted away the fee simple of the Country to carry on war for fear the government should be reformed, and for fear they should lose their Boroughs, and thereby their power of sharing largely in the taxes, have, nevertheless, *estates to preserve*. Those estates they cannot preserve for two years longer, under the present rate of interest on *Funds* and *Mortgages*; and, as they are the makers of the laws, I am of opinion, that they will *lower that interest* in less than two years from this time, or, compel the Bank to issue more paper at a risk of a total loss of all credit.

As either of these measures could not possibly fail, in the course of a few years, to produce the overthrow of the whole

system; and to draw the very teeth of the government, they will be resorted to with extreme reluctance. The regret will not be that of a father parting with a darling child, but that of a robber parting with his pistols, and with the use of his limbs. Therefore, we shall see great *shininess* upon the subject; we shall hear tedious circumlocutions; we shall witness shams and subterfuges of all sorts, to say nothing of those impudent falsehoods, which seldom are wanting upon such occasions. But, all will not avail. The arrears of taxes, which are considerable, aided by the *seizures* for payment now going on all over the Kingdom, and, in Cardiganshire, *with the aid of the military*, may enable the government to get through the ensuing session without any decided measure: but for it to pass another session without lowering the interest, or adding to the paper-money, appears to me to be impossible.

Such, Sir, is our situation, and such, if I am not very much deceived, our prospects. Whether I am right or not, as to the latter, I have kept myself far within bounds in describing the former. And if the evils, not a hundredth part of which I am able to describe, or to name, in a paper of this length, be what I say they are, and if it be manifest, as I think it is, that they could not have existed without the aid of the Bank of England, I trust, that it will not be deemed presumption in me, if I express a most anxious hope, that, in this, as in many other respects, the example of England will be a *warning* to America.

The latter country is so happily situated as to the distribution of property, and the consequent independence of all classes of people, that there may not be much ground to fear that a Banking System, even upon the plan of ours, would, in a very short time, have a dangerous power as to elections; but, I cannot help fearing, that, by degrees, it would, in some measure, at least, acquire such power; and, whenever this power began to operate to any considerable extent, the liberties, the real liberties of the country, must be impaired. If, Sir, you have done me the honour to read "*Paper against Gold*," your recollection will have been called to the rise and progress of this system of paper-money, which has, at last, actually brought misery home to the very door of every man, not paid out

of the taxes. The same work will have convinced you, that taxation, pauperism, and a loss of liberty, have all kept an exact pace with the growth of that system. A Bank, such as ours is, and necessarily must be, is a most powerful instrument in the hands of men at the head of affairs; it corrupts public morals, it creates a fallacious appearance of wealth, it induces men to look to trick and speculation rather than industry for the means of rising in the world, it sets a whole people upon the notion of living upon trust; and, above all things, it tends to render a government, in a great measure, *independent of the people*. Corrupt as the state of our representation is, there were, not more than fifty years ago, now and then effectual oppositions made to the granting of money. Who has heard of such an opposition within these fifty years? At this time *no* man in parliament would think of voting against granting the supplies, any more than he would think of voting for the killing of all the royal family. Such a man would be regarded as having a design to kill the whole of the people, and would be pelted to death by the tradesmen and shopkeepers, if he attempted to walk the streets.

The truth is, that there are, directly and indirectly, nearly as many people interested in the *paper* as in the *land*, and, hitherto, the former have been the most active of the two. It would be some time before a National Bank could thus metamorphose the interests of the people of America; but, *time* does great things; and the evil there would come on more suddenly than it has done here, on account of the possible rivalry in the several States. *Union*, in America, is every thing. United, you will be a great and happy nation; but, divided, you become a string of little, feeble, contending principalities, or Republics, the sport of the European Powers, and especially of England. Nay, it is quite within the scope of possibility, that, after bloody wars against each other, foreign nations would be called in, and that the price of their interference would be colonization and abject slavery.

Now, Sir, if you startle with horror at this idea, ought you not to think very long, before you adopt any measure that may fairly be considered as at all likely, though at a period however distant, to

produce such effects? It is not, I grant, probable, that the system would assume, in your country, the odious features of our system; but, it is *possible*. You will, I am aware, pass *laws* to prevent a connection between the Bank and the government; and so did our ancestors. But, as the system gathered strength, these laws were repealed, or set at defiance, till, at last, the Bank, when called upon for payment of its notes, agreeably to law, applied to the *minister* for authority to *refuse payment*; the minister gave the authority, and the Parliament, without the smallest hesitation, passed a bill of indemnity to him and to all the parties concerned in this scandalous violation of the law, this daring and sweeping robbery.

This proceeding, outrageous as it was, did not produce any commotion, though it has finally produced the ruin above described; but, it is not difficult to foresee, that any proceeding of the sort would be very-likely to burst asunder the bands of your invaluable Union.

For a time, a National Bank might tend to cement the interests of monied men all over the country; but, when an hour of trial came, it appears clearly to me, that it would have a directly different effect as to the people at large, each division of whom might anxiously wish to get rid of the connection, and that thus, by the means of a system, borrowed from England, would be brought about the destruction of that fair edifice of freedom, which has long been an eye-sore to her government, and which, neither by its intrigues nor by all its tremendous and undivided power, it has hitherto been able to destroy or to impair.

I am, Sir, with great respect,

Your most obedient
and most humble servant,
WM. COBBETT.

TO SIR FRANCIS BURDETT, BART.*

On the effect of Taxation with regard to the creating of paupers and the debasing of a people, as illustrated by the prices of food and of labour, and by the farming expenses, in the American Republic, compared with those in England.

Peckham Lodge, January 13, 1816.

SIR—It is now about four years since,

* On Sir Francis Burdett's character I should certainly not have thought it necessary

during a conversation on the effects of Taxation on a people at large, that the following question arose: *whether the labour, absolutely necessary to be performed to maintain men in civil society, would be performed, if the labourers, taking them in general, were not COMPELLED to work by the feeling or dread of immediate want.* Your opinion, from which I rather dissented, was in the affirmative. You observed, that it was a notion, inculcated by despots and their abettors, that men must be kept upon the verge of starvation to insure their steady application to labour; and you insisted, that the *dread of want* was a weaker inducement to labour than the *hope of acquiring property and independence.* In the course of the present letter I shall be able to produce the most complete proof of the correctness of this your opinion; but, my main object is, to lay before you, and before the public, a strong, and, I believe, unquestionable proof, *that pauperism and crimes are the natural offspring of heavy taxation.*

Upon more than one occasion, it has been shown, and, as I thought, clearly shown, that taxes must inevitably make a few rich, and many poor; and that the

to add a note, had I not read in a Boston newspaper, a very scurrilous attack upon him as a "*low demagogue, the associate of Horne Tooke.*" If ancient family were any thing, Sir Francis Burdett's is one of the oldest in the Kingdom; if forty thousand pounds a year in rents were any thing, he has that. But he has much more than these to boast of. He is learned, eloquent, and public-spirited. He is modest, gentle, kind, and generous. Wholly destitute of pride and vanity. He has never given his sanction to any unjust act of the government; he has invariably opposed all such acts; he has never seen a man persecuted by the government without tendering the hand of friendship to that man; and, amongst all the acts of his patriotic life, no one, perhaps, does him so much honour as his generous support of the learned and persecuted Tooke, whose life was in itself a history of the persecutions of the present reign; and, I cannot refrain from observing, that it is particularly base in a *Bostonian* to revile Mr. Tooke as a demagogue, when it is well known, that his sufferings began with a criminal prosecution against him, for having, just before the commencement of the American war, advertised for a meeting to be held in London "to remonstrate upon the subject of the murder committed by the king's troops on our brethren at Lexington."

notion, so often inculcated by those who fatten on the taxes, that "*like dews collected in the cloud, they returned over the land in showers,*" was fallacious. But, still, whatever arguments were made use of to combat this notion, there wanted facts upon the subject. We had, indeed, the facts, that the increase of the *paupers* and of the *crimes* had kept an exact pace, in England, with the increase of *taxation.* We could trace poverty, misery, ignorance, and crimes, pretty clearly to this source; but, still there wanted such facts as I have now at my command.

In the month of August last, I wrote to a friend in Philadelphia, Mr. JOHN MORGAN, whom I name, because I will leave no doubt as to the authority on which I proceed, to send me answers to a number of questions. Mr. MORGAN, who is an Englishman, is a man in trade, and a person on whose report I can place perfect reliance, having known him intimately for twenty years. The information required was stated by me to be intended to be publicly used; and, as it included many heads belonging to country affairs, I requested him to apply, in those cases, to some mutual friends of ours, who are persons of landed estates, and some of whom cultivate their own land. The paper, containing my questions, has been returned to me with the *answers* required. I shall here insert a copy of the whole of the paper, as it stands filled up by Mr. Morgan; but, previously I must make a remark or two as to the relative value of the *money, or currency, of the two countries.*

Paper is, at present, the currency in both countries. The American paper is, in a letter of Mr. Morgan accompanying the answers to my questions, stated to be 18 per centum under the value of its nominal amount in real dollars. One of our Bank dollars, which is not so good as a Spanish Dollar, passes for 5s. 6d. here, though the Spanish Dollar is, in sterling money, worth, at most, no more than 4s. 6d. So that, upon the whole, the paper-currency of America is in much about the same state of depreciation as ours is at this time. Be it observed, however, that this has little to do with the main points, to which I wish to draw your attention; namely, the price of *food*, compared with that of *labour*; and the amount of *labour* on a farm, compared with that of the *taxes*

on the same farm. You will perceive, that the sums are here stated in *Dollars* and *Cents*. The Cent is the *hundredth* part of a Dollar. I will insert the answers just as I have received them, and will add the average price, in our own present currency, in a separate column, looking upon the Dollar in America to be equal to 5s. of our currency, not, however, thinking it worth while to be nice to a mere fraction. In the case of the farming expenses, I thought best to point my questions to one

particular farm; a farm every inch of which I was well acquainted with; the proprietor of which I well knew; in order that, when I came to make use of my information, I might be able to speak with more confidence, and in a manner more circumstantial.

Having thus premised, I will first insert the paper, and then solicit your attention to the remarks which I have to make upon it. It is as follows:

QUESTIONS.*	ANSWERS.	AVERAGE in English MONEY. £ s. d.
What are the usual wages of a labouring man in a farm-house, per year?	140 Dollars	35 0 0
What is the daily pay of a harvest man?	{ 1 Dollar to 125 Cents, if found in food and liquor }	0 5 7½
What is the usual wages of a woman servant in a farm-house, per year?	52 Dollars	13 0 0
What is the price of a pretty good cow, 4 years old?	40 to 60 Dollars	12 10 0
What is the price of a pretty good cart-horse, 4 years old?	80 to 90 Dollars.	21 5 0
What is the price of a good new farm-wagon? . . .	100 Dollars	25 0 0
What is the price of a good new farm-cart?	30 to 40 Dollars	8 15 0
What is the whole number of acres of JAMES PAUL's farm?	260	
How many acres of ploughing land?	175	
How many of orchard?	10	
How many of meadow?	30	
How many of woods?	45	
What is the amount of all the <i>direct</i> taxes he pays to the government in a year?	Look at Book sent you . . .	
What is the amount of his <i>Poor Taxes</i> in a year? . .	27 Dollars	6 15 0
How many bushels of wheat grow, on an average, on an acre of well-prepared land?	20	
What is the common price of a bushel of wheat? . .	162 Cents to 2 Dollars . . .	0 8 0
How many bushels of Indian corn grow upon an acre of land?	20 to 25	
What is the usual price per bushel?	1 Dollar, in the field, this fall	0 5 0
What is the price of a bushel of malt?	125 Cents	0 63
What is the pay, per day, of a journeyman carpenter at Philadelphia?	150	0 7 6
What is the pay, per day, of a journeyman brick-layer at Philadelphia?	2 Dollars	0 10 0
What is the pay, per day, of a journeyman printer at Philadelphia?	150 Cents	0 7 6
What is the price of a pound of Mutton at Philadelphia?	6 Cents to 10 Cents	0 0 4½
. of a pound of Beef?	8 Cents to 16 Cents	0 0 6¾
. of a pound of Butter?	31 1-4 Cents to 37 1-2 Cents.	0 1 8
. of a Turkey?	75 Cents to 250 Cents . . .	0 6 9
. of a Goose?	50 Cents to 100 Cents . . .	0 3 9
. of a Fowl?	31 Cents to 125 Cents . . .	0 3 10
. of a gallon of good American Beer?	40 Cents	0 2 0
. of a gallon of good French Brandy?	250 Cents }	0 12 6
. of a gallon of good West India Rum?	200 Cents }	0 10 0
. of a pound of middling lump Sugar?	42 Cents	0 2 1

* It would be very useful if any gentlemen, who have the leisure, would furnish me, through the publishers, with similar lists, from different parts of the United States, especially from the Western States.

QUESTIONS.	ANSWERS.	AVERAGE in English MONEY.		
		£	s.	d.
What is the price of a pound of white powder Sugar?	33 Cents	0	1	7½
..... of a pound of brown powder Sugar?	23 Cents	0	1	1½
..... of a pound of white Soap?	27 Cents	0	1	4¼
..... of a pound of brown Soap?	16 Cents	0	0	10
..... of a pound of Coffee?	31 Cents	0	1	6½
..... of a pound of Souchong Tea?	2 Dollars	0	10	0
..... of a pound of dipped Candles?	25 Cents	0	1	3
..... of a pound of mould Candles?	28 Cents	0	1	4½
How many people have been hanged in Philadelphia, since I was there, in 1799?	2 Negroes			

What new light, Sir, the bare perusal of this list throws on the most abstruse and most interesting questions of political economy! *Two necks* only, stretched, in the course of 15 years, in a city now containing, perhaps, 100,000 inhabitants, exclusive of the extensive and populous county of which that city is the capital! Compare this, ye eulogists of taxation and the borough system; compare this with the hangings in London, and either confess, that you delight in death, or that you, at last, have some feelings of shame.

But, Sir, to this seemingly wonderful fact the preceding and following facts furnish a solution. In one line we are told, that the journeyman carpenter receives 7s. 6d. a day; and, in the next, that malt is 6s. 3d. a bushel. So that here is a journeyman of a very common trade, only one remove above a common labourer, who earns a bushel of malt a day, and 1s. 3d. over. Such a man, to become a thief, must have thievishness bred in his bones. The pay of the journeyman carpenter in London is about 4s. a day. Here he cannot earn more than about 3 gallons of malt, with nothing over. In Philadelphia he can earn more than 21 pounds of mutton a day; in London only 6 pounds. There 14 pounds of beef a day; here 5 pounds. There about 40 pounds of bread; here about 22 pounds. There a fine large turkey, and have 9d. left; here about half a turkey. There almost 4 gallons of beer; here not more than 2 gallons. There 3 quarts of best Jamaica rum; here not, I suppose, much more than one pint.

But the important facts, those facts which, with their illustrations, will bring us to as close quarters with the borough-mongers as a Noble Lord wished to be brought with the reformers, are those which relate to *farm expenses*. You will

perceive, Sir, that Mr. PAUL's farm consists of 260 acres of land, the acre being the same as our statute acre. I have one particular farm of 250 acres. Now, what I am going to exhibit here is, the outgoing of our two farms, as far as *labour and direct taxes* go; and herein to show, as clear as day-light, I think, the real cause of pauperism and degeneracy. I shall suppose the two farms to be of equal goodness as to their quality of producing. I have 20 acres of wood more than Mr. Paul; I have less meadow; and, while I have about a quarter of an acre of orchard, he has 10 acres, out of which, as he wrote to me about seven years ago, he made 60 hogsheads of cyder in one year. Mine is a common old English farm house; his an excellent square stone house, with sash windows, four rooms on a floor, and even the ground floor, except the kitchen, boarded. Add to this, that his farm lies within eleven or twelve miles of Philadelphia, near one of the great roads to New-York. However, the relative value of the farms is not of much consequence in this case; the chief object being to show what portion of the *expenses* of each goes to the *labourer* and what portion into any *other channel*. My expenses consist of labour, poor-tax, tithes, property-tax, window-tax, horse-tax, house-tax, and dog-tax, the indirect taxes being left out of the question, they being paid, in both cases, in the price of the commodities which we consume. His expenses consist of *labour, poor-tax, and direct-tax*, paid to the general government, on account of the war. *Road taxes* are not to be reckoned, because, though I pay a great deal more than he, on this account, it is so much laid out for my own benefit. Mr. Morgan refers me, for an account of the *direct-tax* to a *book*, which he has sent me, but which

is not come to hand. The whole of this tax, in the United States, amounted last year to 6 millions of dollars, or $1\frac{1}{2}$ million of our present money. Apparently it had not been collected of Mr. Paul when the foregoing inquiries were made. It is now proposed, I see, to reduce it one half immediately, in consequence of the peace. But, taking the war-standard there as well as here, I shall suppose the 6 millions to be in train of collection now, and, upon that ground, I will estimate Mr. Paul's direct tax at 60 Dollars, or 15 pounds our money. This is, I should suppose, overdoing it very largely; but the difference cannot be very material.

With regard to the *quantity of labour* necessary to the proper cultivation of the two farms, there can be very little difference. I will, therefore suppose, that we, each of us, employ, all the year round, five labourers, at full wages. This is not the case. Sometimes I have more and sometimes less. So it must be with him. He used to labour himself, and that was worth two men. He has a son worth four such men as some that I have had the misery to see. Supposing the five men on

both sides, to be all fed and lodged in the house. We will leave the cost of the board and lodging out of the question too, because that must keep pace with the price of farm produce, and, it so happens, that the bushel of wheat there, at the date of Mr. Morgan's letter (10th November last) was, as nearly as possible, the price of the bushel of wheat here at and about Michaelmas, when our farm servants were last hired.

Now, Sir, Mr. Paul pays his man by the year 140 Dollars, or 35*l.* of our money; and I know of no farm servant, hired into the house last Michaelmas, at higher wages than 10 pounds for the year. I believe, that you will find, if you inquire, that the average wages were much under this mark; but, I know of one man hired at 10 pounds, and, therefore, I will take our general wages at that amount. In such a farm each must, to perform all the female part of the work, have two women servants; and the wages of ours would be now, I suppose, not more than 3*l.* 10*s.* each, while the wages of Mr. Paul's would be, as we have seen, 52 dollars, or 13*l.* each. Our expenses, then, will stand thus:

HIS		MINE.	
	£. s. d.		£. s. d.
5 Men at 140 Dollars, or 35 <i>l.</i>	175 0 0	5 Men at 10 <i>l.</i>	50 0 0
2 Women at 13 <i>l.</i>	26 0 0	2 Women at 3 <i>l.</i> 10 <i>s.</i>	7 0 0
Labour, exclusive of board	£ 201 0 0	Labour, exclusive of board	£ 57 0 0
Poor Tax	7 0 0	Poor Tax	87 5 0
Direct Tax	15 0 0	Property Tax	43 17 6
		Assessed Tax on Horses, &c.	15 10 0
		Tithes	36 0 0
	<hr/> £ 223 0 0 <hr/>		<hr/> £ 239 12 6 <hr/>

Thus, you see, Sir, that this American farmer's *expenses* are much about the same as mine. I am, in this respect, as well off as he. He can make no more of his farm than I can of mine, unless he exceed me in skill and industry, or, unless he labour himself; and, then, of course, all his skill, industry, and labour, are to be charged in the amount against him here, seeing that they would bring their value if employed in any other way. But (and you will have perceived the jet of the illustration long enough ago) his expenditure is almost wholly in *labour*; mine almost wholly in *taxes*. His expenditure goes to make little fortunes for those who till his land;

mine to support armies and navies, to maintain, on the one hand, splendour and dignity, and on the other, to preserve from actual starvation those who can labour no longer, or whose labouring parents and husbands have died without being able to leave them the means of satisfying the calls of hunger and thirst.

If my labourer, with his 10 pounds a year, be able to purchase clothes, and to defray the other little expenses of the year, so is the American labourer with 10 of his pounds, and then he has 25 pounds to save. This, Sir, is something like a "*saving bank*!" At the end of 7 years of labour, the latter is a man of pro-

perty; the former still a poor labouring man, who, if he make shift with constant health, to keep from the poor house to the age of fifty, can seldom do it beyond that period; and, if he has a family, they all become paupers even while the father is yet in his youth.

The difference in the lot of the labourers of the two countries, is in no degree to be attributed to the will, or the disposition, of the employers; but solely to the difference in the demands of the two governments, made upon those employers. No more than a moderate profit can, from the effects of competition, and, indeed, from the very nature of things, remain, *upon an average*, to any description of employers in the ordinary callings of life. All beyond this must, and ever will, be taken away by somebody. If the government, or the church, or the pauper, does not take it away, the labourer will take it away. But, if the former take the greater portion, the latter must take the less; and, in whatever degree the demands of the former rise, the portion of the latter must fall; 'til, at last, he has been pared down even beyond what is barely necessary to sustain animal life, and, then, to prevent him from expiring, an addition is made him in the shape of parish relief, which, as you well know, is the case in almost every parish in the kingdom. What, then, becomes, Sir, of BURKE's eulogy on taxes, when he called them "the dews of superfluity, drawn up by the sun of government, to be sent back in showers to fertilize and bless the country?" Much more apt would his figure have been, if he, in drinking the wine, bought with his *pension*, had said: "Come! here go the sweat and blood of the labourer."

The poor taxes in America are employed to relieve persons who fall into *misfortune*, who want *aid*, either from sickness, or some *accident*; and, indeed, I believe, that the greater part of the sums thus raised, go to assist persons *to get out of a state of poverty*. And then the sum is so small, when compared with the amount of labour. Thus, you see, that Mr. Paul's poor taxes amount, in a year, to only *one fifth of the wages of one labourer*; whereas mine amount to the *whole wages of nearly nine labourers*, or, to *forty-five times* as much as his poor taxes, compared with the amount of labour

on both sides. Is it any wonder that our country is filled with wretchedness? Is it any wonder, that almost the whole of our labourers are paupers, when we see, that of the produce of the land so large a portion is taken away by the government, and so small a portion left to those who till that land, and who perform the other labours of the country? It would be the same as to all trades and callings, if we were to push our inquiries into them. We should everywhere find the master tradesman so hardly pressed by the taxgatherer as to be obliged to pare down his journeymen as close as possible; and, we should trace the journeyman and his family to the poor house through the same chain of causes that impel the labourer and his family to the same miserable end.

Mr. BENETT, of Pitt-House, in Wiltshire, said upon his oath before a committee of the House of Commons, that, in his parish, they allowed *to each per son in a labourer's family, the price of a gallon loaf a week, and 3d. over*. A gallon loaf weighs 8lb. 10 oz. So that here is only *a pound and a quarter of bread a day* for each poor creature, one, at least, of whom is to work from morning 'til night. Here is neither meat, nor clothes, nor fuel, nor bedding, except as much as each creature can buy with 3d. per week. And yet, Sir, it is to creatures like these that people are proposing to give *learning*!

As the *miseries* of the people have increased, *crimes* have increased, and people have taken it into their heads, that the want of *education*, as they call it, is the cause of crimes. Hence all the School and Bible schemes. Granted, that *ignorance*, properly so called, is one of the parents of crimes; but, the parents of ignorance are poverty and misery, and as these spring, and ever must spring, from that taxation, which leaves the labourer no encouragement to be industrious, and no means of husbanding earnings, it is all in vain to attempt to enlighten his mind, while the load of taxation remains. The innumerable thefts committed on our farms, against which no vigilance and no locks and bars can protect us; the cheatings, the low cunning, the *falseness*, of the labouring classes, the pilferings of servants, the meanness, the shameless baseness of all the tribe of coach drivers, waiters, chambermaids, porters, &c. All

these arise from the same cause. Their employers are unable to *pay* them sufficiently for their labour, because the demands of the government upon the employers take away so large a part of that which would otherwise go to reward labour. This is the great cause of the degeneracy of the people; this is the great source of all sorts of crimes; and, while this cause exists, School and Bible Societies will labour in vain. It is hunger, joined to a meanness of soul; engendered by an origin and a life of misery. All the institutions for charitable purposes, the Societies for the suppression of vice, for the relief of the distressed, for giving premiums for industry, for the forming of "*Saving Banks*:" these, and scores of others that exist, are mere expedients for the mitigating of the evils of heavy taxation; and, if Mr. GEORGE ROSE were to apply the amount of his salaries and sinecures to the paying of a couple of hundred of labourers, at the rate that my friend JAMES PAUL pays his labourers, he would soon see that his time might be better employed than in writing pamphlets about "*Saving Banks*," which are benevolently intended to receive, and put out to interest, the *surplus* earnings of poor creatures, whose allowance is a pound and a quarter of bread a day and 3d. per week over.

I have said, that it makes *no difference* to the *farmer* whether his expenses consist of taxes and tithes, or of wages to labourers. But, I must beg to be understood as speaking here of a difference *merely pecuniary*, merely as relating to his profit; for in other respects, the difference is very great indeed. In a *money* point of view, it is no difference to me, whether I pay the parson and the government and its *justices* (for they have a control over my poor taxes) so many pounds in the year, or whether I pay these pounds to my labourers; but, if the labourers had the money it would be a much pleasanter life for me, seeing that I should then have to do with a very different sort of men, to say nothing of the pain which a heart almost of stone must experience, in the contemplation of misery so complete. Besides, that which I paid to my labourers could not possibly be used to bear against my own liberties, and could not be expended in any of those various ways, which tend to keep the man who

pays, and who does not receive, taxes, lower in the scale of society than he otherwise would be.

Even noblemen and gentlemen of large estates are in this way affected by the taxes. That which you, for instance, pay to the government and the church (for, in this view of the matter, it is all the same) you cannot have to pay to your servants and tradesmen. I agree, that, as to mere money, you would be no gainer by the change. But, would you not rather give an additional 30*l.* a year to your groom than to give that 30*l.* to the taxgatherer, who hands it over to the government?—Would you not rather see your groom, or your huntsman, in his old age, a man of property, and his family well settled in the world, than give the means of effecting this to support those whom you know nothing of? Would you not rather see your hall, like the hall of your forefathers, the crowded scene of feasting and mirth, than give away, into strange hands, as you now are compelled to do, the means of supporting this formerly amiable characteristic of an English gentleman's mansion? In short, would you not rather have the spending of your fortune yourself, than yield up two-thirds of it to be spent by somebody else, and, perhaps, for purposes of which you wholly disapprove?

There is a strange notion prevailing in England, that society, in America, is yet in a *rude* state; that the American is, and must be, for some time, an *unpolished* nation; that, when they *become* polished; and when *great riches* are accumulated by individuals, they will have as much pauperism and as many crimes as we have; and, that ours has only been the unavoidable progress of *civilization* and *refinement*. If this were true, it would be impossible to deny, that, during this king's reign, we have made a most wonderful progress in the sublime arts of polishing and refining, seeing that, since 1760, the paupers have increased a hundred-fold. But, Sir, if I look back to the days of *Pope*, I do not perceive that there is much proof of an increase of the quantity of the highest of talent. If, by *polish* and *refinement*, are meant *hypocrisy* in all its various branches, we have certainly arrived at the pinnacle. But, as to the Americans being in a *rude* state, on what is the notion founded? Their dress, their

amusements, their manner of eating and drinking, are so much like ours, that, were it not for the absence of beggary, misery, and filthy streets, a man dropped down in an American town would imagine himself still in England. There is no science, no art, known in England, which is not studied and practised in America, and, in numerous instances, with greater success than in England. Their courts of justice have the same forms; law is administered in the same manner; in many cases it is the same law. In matters of commerce and navigation the Americans almost equal us, and are in a fair way of surpassing us; and as to the affairs of war, whether by land or by sea, they have made us feel, and they have convinced all the world, that they want no lesson from any body.

Where, then, are we to look for these marks of comparative *rudeness*? Not in the speeches made in the Congress; not in the Notes and other papers of their diplomatic Ministers; for, as to these latter, it makes one blush for one's country to view their vast superiority. Is it in their friendly and dignified deportment towards foreign nations; in the wisdom and gentleness of their government and laws; in the peaceable behaviour of their citizens; in the absence of crimes, and in the want of rotten boroughs and a "*new drop*:" is it in any, or in all, of these, that we are to look for the proofs of this alleged *rudeness*?

So far, Sir, from its being true, that the Americans are, in a mass, compared to us, in a *rude* state, the very *contrary* is the truth. In America there are none of those *brogues*, or dialects, which distinguish Scotch, and Irish, and English, and Yorkshiremen, and Wiltshiremen and Cockneys from each other. These cease with the emigrant, whose children all speak good and correct English. In America reading and writing, and something beyond merely these, are universal. The American farmer has other charms under his roof besides those attending his hospitality. He can converse with you upon almost any subject. The Bible alone does not form *his* library. He comes in from the heat of the sun, stripped to his shirt, takes down a volume of his Encyclopedia, or some book of science, travels, history, law, politics, or poetry. When he has rested himself, he returns to his fields or his yard.

There is no law of his country, no regulation which he does not understand; no right that he possesses that he does not know how to go to work to defend? no public question in which he does not feel a lively interest, and as to which he is not able to express his opinion. I must be understood, of course, to speak with exceptions. There are stupid men in all countries. But, as a *general* description, I pledge myself for the truth of what I have here said, with the expectation that, in less than four months, this letter will find its way to every part of the country of which I am speaking, and with very powerful reasons not to be looked upon, in that country, as a dealer in falsehoods, and more especially as a flatterer.

Well, then, Sir, if what I have here stated be true, will not you, with all your still unshaken attachment to Old England; (and which, after all, I cannot refrain from participating with you;) with all the sorrow that you must feel at seeing distant regions carry off the fruits of the talents, the labours and the sufferings of Sidney and of Tooke, will not your rising envy be stifled by that generosity which will make you exclaim, "blasted be the man who would destroy the harmony and freedom of such a people."

As to the effect of great individual fortunes on the liberties and moral state of the Americans, such fortunes already exist, and have long existed. There are men in America worth half a million of pounds sterling each. But, as these riches have not been derived from *taxes*, they have not impoverished and degraded any part of the community in their accumulation; and as it is impossible that they should be employed in the purchase of *Boroughs*, they do not appear to be dangerous to public liberty. The Edinburgh Reviewers flatter themselves, that these rich merchants will, in time, become the Lords of the country; and, they tell us, that our government ought to conciliate *their* friendship beforehand. These wise critics know, or appear to know, very little about the matter. They seem very uneasy at the existence of a great democracy. They are anxious to see it converted into a "*more dignified*" state with "*a great body of aristocracy*, able to protect the people against the throne, and the throne against the people." In short, they itch all over to see a list of "*Royal*

Burghs" in America. I dare say the Americans will be much obliged to them for their anxiety; but, I am very sure, that they will think themselves better protected by their power of choosing their own public servants, than they would be by any "*great body of Nobles*," even if imported from Scotland, and if Mr. JEFFREY himself were to go out as king. No, Sir, I do not believe, that the Americans will be very likely to fall upon the scheme of rearing a *throne* for the purpose of wanting "*a body of great Nobles*" to protect them against that throne. Such brilliant schemes they will leave, with all humility, to the *polished and refined* nations of Europe.

Now, Sir, after taking a review of what I have here done myself the honour to submit to your perusal, how wild, how ridiculous, appear the notions, which have lately been so much in vogue: namely, "that taxes, however heavy, do not injure a community, because, though taken from one man, they are given to another; —that the amount of them still remains amongst the whole of a people;—that they do not tend to degrade the labourer, who must, under all changes, still be confined to what will satisfy the mere calls of hunger and thirst;—that it is no matter how great is a nation's debt, seeing that it owes it all to itself;—that taxes and public debts are riches"—and the like? How clearly do the foregoing facts and illustrations show all these notions to be false!

As to the topics which will form a very natural conclusion to this discussion; namely, the manner in which our taxes are assessed and levied; the number and description of persons employed in the business of examining into our private concerns in order to assess us; the pur-

poses to which the taxes are applied; how they are spent in some glaring instances; and what is the effect, on our liberties, of this system of taxation and debts:—these and several other topics, connected with the interesting subject, are all perfectly familiar to you. But, they are not, and cannot be, so familiar in other countries, and, as a thorough knowledge with regard to them must be of great benefit to a people situated as the Americans are, I intend to treat of them, in the most ample manner, through the press of that country. I am, Sir,

With the greatest respect,

Your most humble and obedient servant,

WM. COBBETT.

P. S.—Sir,—Since writing the above, the President's message to the Congress has come to hand. From it you will learn how prosperous are the affairs of that great republic; nor will you forget, that the chief magistrate of America, now containing a population equal, perhaps, to that of England, Scotland, and Wales, is content with a salary of about 6,000 pounds a year. Let the advocates of *costly* government look at this. Let them compare the state of America with our state; let them view a commerce and navigation nearly equal to our own; let them look at the astonishing progress of manufactures in the Republic; let them look at her deeds in arms both by land and by sea; and, when they have so done, let them produce, if they can, one single reason in support of *costly* government. The present prosperity of the Republic is such as to beggar all description. What a contrast! England, at the end of her wars, is plunged into indescribable distress: America, at the end of her war, starts in a career of prosperity unparalleled.

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